

The Road to Restorative Justice

In our 2011 newsletter we described the ongoing 'The Forgiveness Project' (TFP), a workshop which has been running for a couple of years at Guys Marsh. It is delivered every three months to groups of prisoners who have reached the stage where they are ready to confront their offences and themselves. The course is a lead to restorative justice work, and although each course enrolls a different group of men, over the period of their delivery every programme has seen greater gains towards this goal. TFP is a powerful tool in opening the way to a more enlightened thought process.

In February there was a real breakthrough: at the evaluation session 3 weeks later, one participant asked to face his victim. The process towards this is underway but much work has to be done to facilitate a meeting and such an encounter takes tremendous courage on the part of the offender and the victim. However, it can have

revolutionary effects on both, allowing the offender to realise the human side of his crime and feel remorse, and the victim to let go of anger and fear.

Many changes are taking place within the prison service which also affect the direction and funding of rehabilitative programmes. The grant we were awarded now covers one further TFP course. We hope the means will be found for it to continue. ■

Prisoners GUYS ART exhibits



Photos by Giles Henschel

Play your cards right

A warm and spacious house on a chill November day, shared with like-minded friends, a smiling welcome, a fine lunch, enjoyment for a day – what more could you want? For Bridge players, we hoped, nothing more! From the comments on departure, this seemed to be the conclusion on our event which happily raised £1,500 to service some of the provision we are able to deliver in our quest to reduce reoffending.

Two types of Bridge games were played, Chicago and

Rubber, with groups of players in various rooms sitting at a total of 17 tables. Coffee and mingling started the day; the raffle prizes were scrutinized, and the produce table admired, before play began for the morning. Meanwhile, the kitchen was a hive of activity with Friends and volunteers busily preparing the appetising lunch. A relaxing break ensued for the players to replenish themselves and their expertise before commencing play again.

At the end of the afternoon

session the scores were added, the prizes awarded, the raffle was drawn and the produce disappeared rapidly. The Bridge players said their goodbyes, the sun shone and our work began again; restoring the house to tranquil composure. A successful and rewarding day with all the cards well played! Now, what shall we plan for next year? ■



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News for Friends

Newsletter of the Friends of Guys Marsh

No 9 – Spring 2012

Welcome to our 2012 Newsletter

You will notice that GUYS ART, our first art exhibition, has received several mentions. I make no apology for this as it was such an innovative and successful event and hopefully helped to de-mystify the prison to the local community (one of our Aims and Objectives).

Our PERC continues to work tirelessly towards the resettlement of prisoners at HMP Guys Marsh and we are now in the process of applying for further funding to be able, in partnership with the CAB, to continue his employment. The Governor and FOGM are united in the opinion that Marcel's role is vital and much envied by other prisons. Keeping a prisoner in jail costs £45,000 per year and currently there are about 85,000 prisoners.



Governor Burles with Linda at GUYS ART

I don't need to do the arithmetic for you to realise what that costs us, the tax payers.

'Resettlement', not 'Re-offending' is our aim. Re-offending costs the government between 9.5 and 13 billion per year.

The Prison is having to cope with huge cuts in its budget, so our work is ever more important. 'Soft' subjects will be the first to go with the emphasis being on employability, but we are convinced that the arts play a huge part in rehabilitation. Learning how to play in a group of musicians, for instance, encourages co-operation, calmness, achievement and pride. The course that we fund is for beginners and those who are suffering from mental health problems, due to addiction. Playing music can stop men from self-harming.

Thank you for your support this year. We look forward to welcoming you to our fundraising event in September at the beautiful Tithe Barn, Hinton St. Mary. Details will be sent to you nearer the time. Please encourage your friends to join us as Friends of Guys Marsh.

Linda Cowley,
Chairman



SEE DATES FOR YOUR DIARY ON PAGE 10...

Our President Considers

A host of enthusiastic people milled about at the Art Show which the Friends organised at the Sturminster Exchange in February, clearly enjoyed themselves, found the evening exhilarating, and went home to talk about it afterwards. It wasn't only the paintings themselves – done by prisoners and staff – that made the show so successful, but a real sense of adversity overcome, of communality, of how people working together can really succeed in making things better for others. This was felt, I think, by everyone who went along. An art show is a lot of hard work – paintings have to be collected, catalogued, framed, and hung to best effect, publicity has to be organised, there needs to be a buffet – the mini pizzas were especially good – volunteers to cook it and serve it, criticism to be faced (“An art show? I thought Guys Marsh was meant to be a prison, not an hotel!”) and so on.



High Sheriff of Dorset opens GUYS ART

And it didn't cost the taxpayer anything at all. In fact, it may well have saved them money. Recidivism – prisoners re-offending – is reckoned to cost the taxpayer between £9 m and £13 m a year. Family pressure is what tends

to stop men offending. The Friends' whole business is trying to keep families together. 'Visiting' is the key; it's all too easy for families to drift apart during a man's prolonged absence from home. But visiting is not an easy business. It's physically and emotionally exhausting. That's why Friends of Guys Marsh pay for bus services from the station to the prison, provide a base for women and children just outside the prison walls so they don't have to queue in the rain to get through security. It's why we provide art materials for prisoners, and put on art shows: paintings go up on the walls or get sent home: it's good for morale inside the prison and out, cheers the children up, and helps keep re-offending down. We do our best.

A special tribute, then, to Duncan Burles, Governor of HMP Guys Marsh, for his support of the Friends, and the skill with which he balances the need for security and the rehabilitation of offenders, without which the show couldn't have happened at all. And to Imogen Bittner, art teacher at Guys Marsh for seven years, whose task is to negotiate these needs, and whose achievements in doing so was demonstrated to such excellent effect on February 6th. The prison lies in the most beautiful part of Dorset, but prisoners don't get much chance to appreciate it – they must rely on the inspiration of their teachers, and at Guy's Marsh find it. Also, of course, inside the prison walls, are our



Giles Henschel

prize winning gardens created by staff and prisoners working together, a photographic exhibit of these being the highlight of the many staff entries in the Art Show. A good time had by all, indeed.

If you're not already a friend of Guys Marsh, please do join us! Contact telephone numbers are on the back of our newsletter.

*Fay Weldon C.B.E., President
Friends of Guys Marsh*

SHOP THE CHARITABLE WAY

A painless and cost free way to charitable giving is through online shopping. By registering for free with easyfundraising you can select your charity (preferably Friends of Guys Marsh!) and a percentage of the purchase price will automatically be paid to that charity by the stores on the scheme. The web site lists the participating organisations. To sign on or find out more, go to www.easyfundraising.org.uk

RAISING THE PROFILE

Guys Marsh is our local prison and as such is a part of the community, but the majority of people are blissfully ignorant of its role amongst us. As long as people are locked away the general public give prisons no thought and are unaware of the work done to turn lives around for everyone's benefit. As a means of swaying the balance of interest in our area, representatives of our committee attend as many appropriate local functions as we can.

In November we had an excellent opportunity to give an insight into this work, and FOGM's contribution to it. We usually attend SturQuest's community lunch at The Exchange, Sturminster Newton, with our stall. This forum is held every six months to give people information about the charities and agencies within the county. Speakers are selected to describe their particular subject, always informative and interesting, and on this occasion it was Friends of Guys Marsh who were chosen. Our PERC, Marcel, and S.O. Graham Woollard took the stage to tell the delegates about their joint roles in leading the Partnership Team at Guys Marsh, describing the

innovative procedures they have initiated and their plans to carry them forward. Their amusing and entertaining style of delivery on this serious subject kept the audience engrossed; interest was intense and many questions followed their presentation.

The Exchange has been prominent in other activities this year. It was the venue for our inaugural GUYS ART Exhibition during all of February which drew much publicity and support. Again, earlier in the year, we displayed our stall at the Volunteering Fair there, and were delighted to enroll two new Friends who have also become most helpful volunteers with us.

In addition to our publicity being on show at our own events, Committee Members and Friends display our leaflets and newsletters at other events they are involved in. Through this we have gained Friends and been given donations, especially, most generously, from Claire Macdonald's Souk and David Davies's music concert in Salisbury. If anyone is interested in displaying our publicity at other events, please get in touch and help raise our profile. ■

Let's Jam Together

Several eager men and one enthusiastic tutor start with tuning up instruments, decide the next learning steps, discuss the songs to work on; practice solo or split into pairs to improve performance technique or songwriting skills, and another music session commences. A little paperwork on formatting chords and more practice, then the fun begins; jamming favourite songs or experimenting with their own. Pressing problems are lifted for a while, alleviating stress. Worksheets are handed out for study in cell with background reading on the history of music or transposing a song from G to D. This builds into a folder for use in future sessions.

Ann provides this weekly distraction for music beginners and some have progressed to join a more advanced class whilst still acting as peer-tutors of new learners. In danger of closing, our sourcing of new funds has, thankfully, allowed her classes to continue for another year. ■

THANKS TO OUR BENEFACTORS

Our newsletter would have little to report without the generous approval of our supporters! To all our Friends, Volunteers and the following, please accept our heartfelt thanks:

- The Valentine Trust
- Tudor Llanckelly Chase SW Partnership
- Anton Jurgens Charitable Trust
- Two (anonymous) Charitable Trusts
- Agusta Westland
- Graham Cole
- The Bournemouth Community Foundation, Dorset and Poole.
- The Pitt-Rivers Charitable Trust
- Tim Longfoot
- Supporters who have independently organised events and talks.
- The kind ladies of the Mothers Union and our Rota volunteers on visiting days.
- Claire and Robert Macdonald for the generous use of their home to raise money for us.
- Lucinda Sunnucks for her expertise on our Bridge Day.
- Christine Willis for her superb graphic work on our newsletters.
- GUYS ART photographer, Giles Henschel, and exhibits judge, Simon Latham, Port Regis Art Master.

A Greener Future

Well, the crocuses have crept through the turf, defying the frosts to strut their stuff in the sunshine...the daffs are erupting into bloom...we must be on the cusp of springtime!! Despite a relatively mild winter, it takes some lateral thinking and a certain degree of commitment to stay busy and focused over these months and I am most grateful to all those men who have contributed during the darker days of the year. The Gardens, Horticulture and Farms working parties have all pitched in to our next big project, a Biodiversity Corridor, designed to develop skills and enhance the environment.

Work on the Corridor is progressing. Tucked around the bog garden the new wildlife pond and surrounding landscape are developing well. Digging, shovelling, raking, forking and (eventually!) planting. Together they form the start of the corridor, where it is ideal for plants dedicated to attracting a variety of wildlife. And beyond the pond and woodland borders we hope to introduce an array of wildflowers, and establish a broad strip of longer grass. This land already houses a healthy population of field voles and a resident barn owl, so our intention is to plant varieties

that will attract more butterflies and bees to add to the tapestry. Native hedgerow will also be planted to bridge the gaps around two of the wings and offer more nesting and feeding sites for the birds. Additionally, Mary Ridgewell (Chaplain) has made many kind donations of baby cowslips with which we hope to populate one of the banks, to create a vision that emulates the chalk downland in the distance. Thanks Mary!

From the middle of March, we will begin to deliver a Level 2 Diploma in Environmental Conservation (through N-ergy), so this whole area will create an ideal training ground.

Our 'grow your own' efforts by one wing should start in earnest this March. In 2011 (its pilot year) we made promising progress and many of the men on the wing gave their time voluntarily; to clear ground, sow and tend to crops. Potatoes, garlic, onions, herbs, beans, beetroot, pumpkins and various salad crops were all grown with a degree of success!

Much of the produce harvested last year was sent to the Kitchen for preparation and then returned to the wing to ensure that the same men could enjoy the product of their efforts. This year however, the prison has invested in a minor



The newly created wildlife pond

refit on the wing servery, the intention being that these men will not only learn how to grow fresh produce but also how to prepare, cook and share their meals. Creating this self sufficient cycle will no doubt play a vital role in enhancing life skills and better prepare the men for release into the community.

Following a tip off from FOGM chairman, Linda Cowley, some 18 months ago, we have survived the rocky road of funding application! With much dedication and support from our partner, the horticultural charity Groundwork, we are now close to signing a contract with Sowing SEEDS to develop the 'wilderness' area at the far end of the estate. Our intention is to render the land productive again and provide greater scope for training, qualifications and support for resettlement work to take place.

A huge thank you to FOGM for their continued interest and support.

*Kate, Gardens Instructor
March 2012*



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 14th September at The Tithe Barn, Hinton St. Mary.
Jazz on a Summer's Evening – with the Bell Street Jazz Band.
And Alan Frost DL, talking about 'A Year in the Life of a High Sheriff'
Full details will be sent later by email (preferably) or letter.
Your email addresses needed please if not given already. Thanks

FRIENDS SOCIAL – please respond to the article on page 7 with your preferences.

Busman's Holiday (of sorts!)

The offer of visiting another prison is not one that our committee could turn down, so one bright morning in September saw us knocking on the big door of HMP Dorchester. A friendly welcome awaited us from the Governor, Steve Hodson, former Deputy Governor of Guys Marsh, who had invited us, and been so supportive of our work during his association with us.

The contrast between our establishments could not be greater – from rural views, modern buildings and well tended open spaces to grey, cramped Victorian grimness, confined in a small space, hidden behind high walls between town buildings – the effect was bleakly claustrophobic.

Dorchester is a category B prison which mainly houses prisoners on remand, 50% of whom come to Guys Marsh after sentencing. Some convicted men remain and can be a stabilising influence on the newly arrived, coming straight from court as they do, often in a state of shock.

We were given a comprehensive tour, seeing how best use is made of the facilities

inside and out, and the emphasis on involving men in starting valuable work programmes which they can continue on transfer to their sentence prison.

Custodial emphasis is necessarily different from that of a training prison like Guys Marsh and we were keen to learn about this; the differences, how they inform present practice, the methods employed and their effects for prisoners and staff. We heard with great interest of the opportunities that interaction between prisons can achieve, and the work already underway by the four Dorset prisons towards co-operation for their mutual benefit. This is the direction which our Guys Marsh Partnership team fully endorses, in conjunction with their own pioneering work collaborating with outside agencies.

The grey conditions of the environment were overridden by the Governor's positive attitude to combating reoffending and the backing of the staff we met. We left with an understanding and appreciation of the challenges of a remand prison, and grateful for the fresh air environment of Guys Marsh! ■

A large print was made of one of the GUYS ART paintings which we auctioned at the launch.

This is now available as a greetings card for £1.50 – apply to Chairman



Reduce the spiral

Debt is a problem not only in the community; it is, unsurprisingly, also in the prison population. Prisoners need professional advice to tackle the burden which faces them and their families. When an offender enters custody the income shock for him and his family is great. Resolving, or at least controlling, the debt is a crucial requirement in preventing its escalation. We are all aware that out-of-hand debt can lead to desperate measures, often criminal ones. Without guidance on this score ex-offenders can so easily become offenders again.

Debt advice in Guys Marsh had been provided by the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Shelter, and other organisations until funding cut backs in April 2011 affected this arrangement. A gap in the system ensued and, through the initiative of our PERC, FOGM was asked to step in to retain the services of a debt adviser for one day per week. We were already aware of the high volume of excellent debt work undertaken on behalf of our prisoners and were adamant that this should not be lost. We therefore arranged for the continuation of this service until this March. The initiative has been massively successful with substantive success being made. With our agreed tranche of funding at an end, we are relieved to learn that arrangements have been put in place to maintain the Debt Adviser and her valuable work. ■

GUYS ART LAUNCH



Giles Henschel

GUYS ART, Friends of Guys Marsh's first exhibition of artworks by prisoners and prison staff was a great success with nearly 80 submissions – far more than we anticipated. The show proved to be, not only a most enjoyable event, but also a very positive way to give the wider world that surrounds HMP Guys Marsh a glimpse of the challenging therapeutic and transformational work that goes on within the closed prison estate.

We were delighted and honoured that the High Sheriff of Dorset, Mr Alan Frost, who

has shown such commitment to the prison rehabilitation cause during his year in office, joined our President Fay Weldon to formally open GUYS ART at the beginning of February. The show ran at The Exchange, Sturminster Newton's arts and community centre, throughout the month. It attracted many visitors from near and far who were impressed with its vitality and variety and also moved by the inner journey that some prisoners' work clearly reflected.

For the prisoners whose work was exhibited, the show has meant a great deal. It has taken

skill, dedication and no small amount of bravery to make and show these works, many of which are highly personal. Being praised for creating a drawing, painting or sculpture is often the first time that a prisoner has ever had positive recognition. The FOGM Art Awards of vouchers for art materials went to Gary, for his piercingly emotional picture 'Queen of Shadows', a hunched figure tormented by birds, and Penny won the staff award for her delicate study of ivy, one of five exquisite botanical studies she exhibited.

Thank you to Simon Latham for judging the exhibits and to everyone who attended GUYS ART and who worked on the exhibition. Above all, thank you to the prisoners who put so much time, thought and effort into their pieces and to Imogen, their teacher, for her dedication. We are looking at how GUYS ART 2013 can be made even better, with the possibility of making some art available for sale. Do please email us if you have any other suggestions

Bridget Graham

Time to Care

The Official Prison Visitors' (OPV) motto is 'Time to Listen, Time to Care, Time to Share'. All prisoners are entitled to apply for an OPV even if they do have visits from family and/or friends. The prisoners I have visited are, on the whole, far from home and are estranged from their families. The service we offer is entirely confidential and we only liaise with the Wing Officers or the Chaplain if we feel the prisoner may self-harm or be suffering violence from fellow inmates. I have visited a wide variety of men – from those who are foreign nationals and find English very difficult, to those who have spent over 17 years in various prisons and see no hope for the future. On the whole it can be rewarding – particularly if you can build up a relationship of trust to the extent that the prisoner finds it beneficial to offload feelings – something they probably don't do with their fellow inmates. Guys Marsh now has quite a large percentage of 'Lifers' and one of the Wings is being converted to house them.

FOGM Committee OPV Representative



Giles Henschel

Gary's prizewinning painting 'Queen of Shadows'

Do you have any Fairies going begging?

What do the world's largest indoor rain forest and Guys Marsh have in common...more, much, much more than you may think. Whereas all who visit this wonderful attraction in Cornwall cannot fail to be impressed by the experience, not everybody is aware that the Eden Project is also a charity and social enterprise. A partnership between the highly motivated, committed and socially aware Farms and Gardens team at Guys Marsh and the inspirational team at Eden, laid the foundations for a brighter, greener future for prisoners at Guys Marsh, both while in prison and on release.

A bold vision that will ultimately transform the prison estate, creating allotments,

varied and functional areas, including a bog garden, exercise garden and a reading/contemplation garden, are now being transferred from ideas on paper to their realisation. The Farms and Gardens team, who together with prisoners from Guys Marsh have won a number of awards at gardening shows, including a gold and best in show at a National level, are in the process of converting dreams into reality.

The project has a diverse array of benefits which not only assist prisoners but society itself. Prisoners benefit with hands on experience, academic achievement and prospects of work on release. These skills are then introduced into the communities to which ex-

offenders return, to the mutual benefit of all.

Just like a mini Eden, this, as you can imagine, will be a gargantuan task. The beauty of the strategy is that the work will be taken on in bite size chunks, making funding and logistics less daunting. EDEN offer expertise and hands on assistance, not buckets of money, and the exciting thing about that is it allows partnerships to form, extending the magic and opportunity.

Why not get involved in a piece of EDEN? If you or your organisation can contribute get in touch – skills, funding, or even any surplus Fairies are all considered!

*Marcel Williams
PERC*

GUYS ART – a visitor's impression

Retirement provides me with the time and opportunity to visit as many art shows in Dorset as possible. There is always the sense of anticipation before arrival. What will the standard of painting be like? Will the pictures be mainly watercolour or oil or gouache or pastel or an assortment of the four. And the subjects - landscape, still-life, portrait, modern and so on.

So with these criteria in mind I went to GUYS ART in early February. My first impression

was the use of colour - strong, vibrant and attractive. I enjoyed the variety of subjects and the variety in the size of the paintings. We all have personal tastes and although I noted my preferences, it would be unfair to list them here as to do so might suggest dislike of the others and that is not the case. My overall impression was one of appreciation and admiration of the work and skill that went into the paintings. I know from my own experience the pleasure in completing a painting that has gone well and the disappointment if it just does not work.

The prisoners and staff of HMP Guys Marsh should be congratulated on their work. I do not wish to sound condescending, but please do not give up. Persevere with this

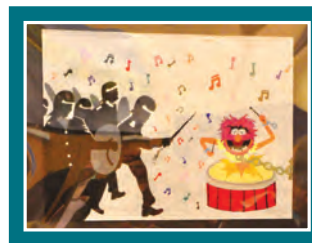


Giles Henschel

Fay, Simon and Imogen before judging

rewarding pastime. Many years ago a prominent politician and keen amateur painter wrote "We must not be too ambitious. We cannot aspire to masterpieces. We may simply content ourselves with the colours of the paintbox." Painting is a great relaxation. Congratulations and thank you for a great show. I am looking forward to the next one already.

Richard Martin



Partnerships

Partnership working at Guys Marsh is flourishing and becoming ever more essential as the Prison Service continues to focus on reducing re-offending. These voluntary and community organisations provide services and skills the prison on its own cannot offer, covering essential areas including mentoring and support schemes, basic skills training, family ties, housing and employability. Our Partners bring expertise, knowledge and practical support in key areas and importantly offer continuity after release.

The majority of 2011 has been spent strengthening ties with agencies already working in Guys Marsh, in particular the Prince's Trust, Footprints, the North Dorset CAB and Barnardos.

New partners over the last year include Recoop (Resettlement and care for older ex-offenders and prisoners) and GB Job Club. AFC Bournemouth have also become partners; after initially working with the Prince's Trust they have teamed up with the Prison Gym to run coaching courses.

The Pre Release course is now firmly established with the content primarily focused on employability. The course is facilitated by external and internal Partners with sessions on CV writing, interview techniques, relationships and first aid. In line with new government legislation the Jobcentre Plus refer prisoners claiming Jobseeker's Allowance straight on to the government's work programme, where they will receive specialist support to get them into employment as quickly as possible. A key element of resettlement is access

to bank accounts and linking them to the Pre Release course and Jobcentre Plus interviews.

The greatest challenge of the last year has been trying to establish community work placements. There have been opportunities but various issues along the way have prevented fulfilment. However, we now have a volunteer working in a charity shop with the promise of a similar position to follow. There is also potential for an assistant chef with Age Concern and positions with a local special needs school.

Developments for the coming year depend to some extent on various funding applications, most notably for our Barnardos Family Support Worker and for our Housing Officer, both of whom play a significant part in planning for release and reducing reoffending. Our aim is to develop an approach that will strengthen the relationship between Guys Marsh and VCS organisations in order that community resources are mobilised to strengthen the support provided to prisoners, and their families, during imprisonment and on release. Voluntary organisations and volunteers form an integral part of the delivery of constructive work both within Guys Marsh and the community, and full use will be made of the strengths and diversity of such organisations, together with prison staff, in providing support and encouragement as a bridge to the wider community.

Lastly, but by no means least, we continue to have the support of Friends of Guys Marsh, along with the services of Marcel Williams (Prison Effective



Linda presenting the staff shield to Lyn Verran

Resettlement Coordinator). Marcel works tirelessly, together with his assistant Rachel, helping offenders deal with financial and legal issues. He also devotes considerable time working with our Partners and statutory agencies, seeking new partners, and sourcing funding.

I am very grateful for the enthusiasm and commitment of all the staff and volunteers of whom there are too many to mention in this article.

Graham Woollard
Partnerships Liaison Officer

Saturday Refreshments in the Visitor Centre

Can you spare a couple of hours between 12.30 and 2.30pm on an occasional Saturday (usually once every 2 to 3 months) to help with the serving of teas, coffee and soft drinks in the Visitor Centre, which is located outside the main building of the prison? If so, and you would like to join our volunteers, please give me a call for further information. Beryl Adams 01258 820450.

A Productive Year

Despite the economic recession, FOGM has had a positive year, being able to maintain core objectives and fulfil all initiatives put to us.

Our major outlays have been in the continuation of The Forgiveness Project workshops, and the running of the Saturday Nordcat Bus, both made possible by the generous grants we received for them. We are pleased to have been able to support the work of the CAB Debt Adviser by bridging the financial gap for ten months whilst prison negotiations took place to secure her permanent position. The Music for Beginners class, lacking in funding, was due to close in December but was thankfully saved for this year by a sympathetic charity new to us, the Anton Jurgens Charitable Trust. We procured a Grassroots Grant from the Community Foundation to purchase new toys for the play area in the Visits Hall. Jackie, Barnardo's Family Support worker, tells us these have had a big impact on the children and has encouraged good interaction with their Dads.

A new project, recently put to us by a tutor in Education, was for a 'Get into Reading' workshop. We agreed to support this as a pilot for ten weekly sessions. After just two sessions with a variety of material, some men asked for Shakespeare sonnets to be on the agenda!

Individual requests for help from prisoners have increased, with every application carefully considered. Small grants have benefited men, either during their sentence or on release, with hopefully lasting results.

Just recently we received a grateful letter of thanks from one such former prisoner who has progressed to a good job and is to be married soon. Uplifting news! In February we supplied bicycling gear for a prisoner to go out on Licence to a daily community placement – a peddle for him in the right direction.

The Partnerships work developed within our region by the PERC and the Prison Liaison Officer is now beginning to broaden its scope to encompass co-operative association with organisations in all the other areas to which our prisoners return on release. Many men are from Bristol and the West Country, some from London and a few further afield. Building such a sustainable network is a daunting task, as there are many long established barriers to break down in order to create a new way of co-operative communication. The Tudor LankellyChase SW Partnership's grant for the PERC's position finishes in December. As a further two or three years are ideally needed before the wider partnership ethos is securely set in place, the preparation of a new bid by the CAB and FOGM to procure the necessary funds is underway. We will know in September if we have been successful.

Our Art Exhibition, GUY'S ART, originally planned for our Friends and Volunteers Social Event, developed into a month long display of the amazing art work produced inside the confines of prison life. It has been stimulating

to realise the success of this new venture and to be able to reveal to a wider public the talent discovered and nurtured. We held a private reception on the opening night for our supporters, chose the winning entries and celebrated the evening with a medley of chat and refreshments.

Good relationship with staff is vital and we recognise their



Jamie Boot receiving his staff award from Linda

commitment with awards for outstanding performance. Jamie Boote received the FOGM engraved shield for his work on Inductions; settling new arrivals in and giving them a strong direction towards rehabilitation from outset. Lyn Verran, deals with the visits process with warmth and compassion, making the experience as stress free for families and children as she can – another well deserved recipient of our staff award. To mark our appreciation of all the staff, we hosted a seasonal buffet during a December lunch changeover and arranged for mince pies to be delivered to the night staff.

Our committee is a hard working, cohesive group under

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the direction of our dedicated Chairman, Linda. She has a high profile amongst the staff, and keeps her finger firmly on the pulse. Over the year only a few changes have taken place amongst us. We have welcomed two new Trustees; Jonathan Davies, who has stepped up from the body of the committee, and Bridget Graham, bringing her prison experience from the Toe by Toe reading charity. Due to promotion we lost the valued guidance of Steve Hodson, Deputy Governor. Also Claire Macdonald's driving force and far sightedness will be missed, as her diverse commitments have drawn her away.

Several committee members have generously donated to us money raised by their

own efforts. In particular, Marcel, who completed a sponsored 10K Bridge to Bridge run last spring, Claire, from a private event of her own, and Rachel from her husband's Church concert. Other donations have been gratefully added through talks and online charitable giving. An application to Waitrose to be included in their Charity Box scheme resulted in good support from January's shoppers.

Our annual fund raiser was in November this year. We organised a Bridge Lunch, spreading the invitations wide,



At the Exhibition
- an inmate!

which resulted in a practically full house of dedicated players and was a rewarding day. Plans are formulating for 2012's event which will take place in The Tithe Barn, Hinton St Mary, by kind permission of Mr Anthony Pitt-Rivers, on Friday 14th September. Details will be sent to all our Friends when they are finalised.

As new demands are put on the Governors, and changes are made, we persevere in our supportive role, seeking ways to improve prospects for those both inside and outside the secure fence. *Roberta Primrose*

MY DUAL ROLE

It is a privilege to be both a member of the IMB – Independent Monitoring Board – and to be the Board's representative on the Friends of Guys Marsh committee.

IMB's are statutory bodies, whose members' role is to monitor decency, respect and fair treatment inside the prison. At Guys Marsh we are a group of 14, working in teams of three and visiting the prison for one week each month. We visit all parts of the prison; work places, residential wings and recreational facilities, and acquaint ourselves with specialist courses and interventions followed by offenders. We are also able to speak with offenders individually about any problem they may feel unable to resolve and to advise on the ways in

which they may make use of systems within the prison to follow through concerns.

Whilst all prisons have IMBs, Guys Marsh is fortunate in having the backing of FOGM, who support the activities of offenders and programmes in the prison which work towards rehabilitation. When speaking to newly arrived prisoners they are always pleased to hear about the bus, heavily subsidised by FOGM, which their visitors can use on Saturdays to travel between Gillingham Station and the prison, and to know their visitors can enjoy a warm drink, biscuit and friendly chat with Friends who man the Visitors' Centre.

The PERC is deemed a real 'Mr. Fix It' by the men when

they meet him. Marcel, whose post is, of course, funded through grants secured by FOGM, has so many contacts with partners and agencies in the community that he is able to arrange the help and services many offenders need on release. And it is through Marcel that many requests for help from individual offenders come.

As IMB Board members we have the real pleasure of meeting men who feel boosted by the help and recognition they receive, often conveyed in phrases like "someone has confidence in me", or "they must believe in me or they wouldn't help". Since rehabilitation is one of the main aims of any sentence the support of FOGM is invaluable.

Jane Childs

FRIENDS – your comments please!

What do you expect from your role as a Friend? We like to show our appreciation of your support by arranging an annual gathering and over the years have held a variety of informative evening talks on current issues at Guys Marsh with a buffet supper. This year we thought we'd offer you a social occasion in a different

venue, combined with a display of prisoners' art, and although the Preview evening was well attended, not as many Friends as hoped for were present. A lot of people visited the GUYS ART exhibition during the month, of whom a number would have been Friends, but please let us know how you feel – do you want a social (if so what format

and content do you appreciate) or do you feel that our newsletter is all you require from your support.

We would be so pleased to hear from you, by email info@friendsofguysmarsh.co.uk, or by phone to Linda, Beryl or Roberta. ■

Give Me a Break

We are receiving a growing number of small requests from prisoners keen to better their education, employment prospects and skills. This is an important area to encourage and we are open to granting all genuine requests.

One prisoner had been taking an Open University course in Social Sciences since 2007 but, no longer eligible for further funding, asked for a top-up to add to the money he had raised from other sources to be able to gain his qualification.

Another needed a small award to take a Personal Fitness course. Later he helped a fellow prisoner who wanted to follow the same route by tutoring him on the theoretical element of the

course: a double benefit to our grant.

A Plumbing Course which included accommodation had been arranged for one man on his release. He had no funds to pay for the accommodation without which his training would be impossible. He resourced some of the money and we made up the balance to secure his place.

A book voucher was given to a GM ex-prisoner for his college gardening course.

Another prisoner needed an instruction book for a course he was following.

A talented member of the Art Class planned to make painting his career: on his release we presented him with an art voucher to buy the materials needed to start up his work.

The Prison Council (democratically elected representatives from each wing of the prison) requested help to produce a special Christmas edition of their monthly magazine. In order to enliven the otherwise black and white version we provided a set of colour cartridges.

These are all relatively small gestures which often make

The Birth of FOEP

The launch of a new Friends organisation was held last November at Erlestoke, Wiltshire. Our advice on setting up a support system similar to ours was sought from a member of the Independent Monitoring Board of HMP Erlestoke earlier in the year. We gave all the help we could and have followed their progress with interest.

A young Governor, who had worked closely with us before he transferred to Erlestoke, spoke highly there of our work and the benefits to prison and inmates; thus the spark was lit to follow in our footsteps. The governing Governor gave it his full backing, Trustees were found, start-up funds raised and charity status applied for.

We attended the enjoyable evening launch which was well attended by local people, keen to give Friends of Erlestoke Prison their backing. FOGM wish the committee every success in their budding venture. ■

a big difference to attitudes, confidence, engagement and well being, and far reaching benefits can ensue. ■

2011 Christmas Card designed by a prisoner

